

The Tears of Piety.

A N

E L E G Y

On the much lamented Death of the

Rev. JOHN FLETCHER,

Late Vicar of MADELY in SHROPSHIRE;

Who died August 14th, 1785.

By Way of Condolence to his afflicted Widow, and
bereaved Flock.

By PHILAGATHOS.

Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit.

Hor.

B A T H;

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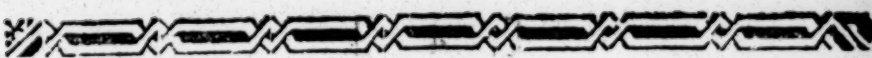
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DEDICATION.

TO MRS. MARY FLETCHER.

MADAM,

A Consciousness of the great Worth, and a Regard for the esteemed Memory, of your late pious Consort, first moved the Writer to *attempt* Something by Way of ELEGY, to perpetuate them: as a *Sensibility* of his uncommon Loss to the Church of God at large, and more particularly, to the Flock he successfully fed for so many Years, and above all, to *you*, who must *most* tenderly feel the fatal Stroke—*still* heaves his Bosom with a sympathetic Sigh. As your eminent *Piety* entitles you to this Address, so your peculiar Interest in this moving Scene, has determined him to lay *this* little Offering at *your* Feet, as the Person most likely to *smile* upon it.

He is sufficiently aware, that the Subject demanded a much abler Pen than his; and that, in the present Poem, a critical Eye may discern many Blemishes and Defects. But as it has not been assumed by any, to his Knowledge, he humbly hopes this Effort, however imperfect, will meet with a favourable Indulgence from *you*, Madam, and the Candid and Judicious; and that his *Intention*, and the justly-esteemed Name of FLETCHER will recommend it to the Religious (for whom *alone* he writes), even where the Performance itself most palpably fails. His Muse is very young and feeble, and now *first* ventures to appear abroad.—Sensible of inadequate Abilities, he never *designed* to draw a
finished

finished Portrait of that amiable *Man of God*; but only to *sketch* a few leading Features in his more public Character, and *such* as might give him Occasion to condole with his afflicted Widow, and bereaved Flock.

If Tears, and all the *melting* Tenderness of Affection, be at *any Time* admissible; surely they are under Circumstances similar to *your* present ones. If Sympathy be *ever*, in the least Degree, valuable, it must be at *such* a Time, as *this*. And if *ever* Eulogies be due to Worth, surely they must be to *such* Worth, as has, lately, been transplanted, in *him*, from among Mortals, and lives no more on Earth, but in painful Remembrance. Accept, therefore, Madam, *this* sincere, tho' feeble Effort to pay a Tribute to *his* Memory, who deserved *so* well of all, and whose Name (thro' his Writings, &c.) will be ever dear to Thousands, who never saw him; and to console a Heart so deeply concerned in, and wounded by, his Dismission from the Body.

You are no stranger, Madam, to the sovereign Aids our Divine Religion affords on these, and every trying Occurrence in life. It administers, at present, adequate Supports and Consolations, and opens a Prospect to a most glorious Day, when *all Tears will be for ever wiped from our Eyes*. That you may continue to experience its divinest Supports, and be finally blest with the beatific Vision, where you will be eternally re-united to your beloved and now-lamented Partner, is the earnest Prayer

Madam,

Your very humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.



A N

E L E G Y

On the much lamented Death of the

Rev. JOHN FLETCHER.

COME, thou Inspirer of my jocund Hours !

My humble Muse, late Partner of my joys !*

Awhile divest thee of thy sprightly Pow'rs,

And change the sweeter Accents of thy Voice ;

Upon the Willows hang the tuneful Lyre,

Put on thy sable Weeds, and join the weeping Choir.

In grief-fraught Silence mourn the Tale of Wo,

Which late assail'd my melancholy Ear ;

Or let, in tragic Strains, thy Numbers flow,

And drop with me the sympathetic Tear :

In Sorrow, as in Joy, sustain thy Part,

And with thy plaintive Warbling soothe this aching Heart.

B

Let

*Alluding to a gracious Providence, which the Muse commemorated in a little Ode of Praise.

Let others welcome, in melodious Strain,
 The *Saint* arriv'd in Realms of brightest Day;
 Join thou the num'rous, weeping, widow'd Train,
 Who mourn the *Pastor* snatch'd so soon away—
 Ah! who can hold the Tribute of a Tear,
 When told th' illustrious FLETCHER lies inhumed here

He's gone! he's gone! his Voice is heard no more,
 Sounding the dread Alarm of *Wrath* Divine;
 Or op'ning, with enrapt'd Delight, the Lore,
 Where *Grace* and *Love* in all their Glories shine:
 O! how transported with the heav'nly Theme,
 When spreading forth the Virtues of IMMANUEL's Name!

Ye Saints of *Madely*! say, (for you can tell,)
 What gen'rous Pity fill'd his anxious Breast!
 What moving Language from the Preacher fell,
 When pointing Sinners to their only Rest!
 A bleeding SAVIOUR, to their Eyes display'd,
 He shew'd in all the *melting* Forms of Love array'd.

The humbled Penitent, whose broken Heart
 Dissolves in Grief, or is with Anguish tore;
 Who feels the Pangs of keen Conviction's Dart,
 Must, now, his *Friend*, his FLETCHER's Death deplore:
 No more, *that* Hand will bring thee kind Relief,
 Apply the healing Balm, or soothe thy raging Grief.

Weep,

Weep, tender Lambs ! whose young and feeble State
 Demands the Kindness of a Shepherd's Care !
 Weep, and confess your Loss in *Him* is great,
 Who in his soft'ring Arms your Spirits bare :
 He, gently, led the timid, drooping Souls,
 Where sacred Consolation in *still* Current rolls.

Weep too, ye num'rous sable-mantled Train !
 Sad Monuments of Adam's foul Disgrace !
 Children of Sorrow, Poverty, and Pain,
 And all the Ills, that writhes a fallen Race !
 Your Eyes, may now exhaust their briny Store ;
 For ah ! the Hand, that gently wip'd them, is no more !

'Twas *his*, to cheer the gloomy Haunts of Wo,
 And wide diffuse the Beams of Charity ;
 To make the widow'd Heart with Joy o'erflow,
 Revive the Faint, and prop the feeble Knee ;
 To shield th' oppressed from the Tempter's Steel,
 Or with Compassion's Balm their wounded Spirits heal ;

Witness to *this*, these heart-affecting Sounds,
 Which issue with his now-expiring Breath !
 His Love for you, ye Sons of Want, abound's,
 And blooms beyond the chilling Pow'r of Death ;
 " Alas ! my Poor ! what will you do ? " he cry'd ;
 " I'm dead to you, my Poor ! my Poor ! " * he spake, and dy'd.

* See the Account of his Death, Page 14, Bristol Edition.

Witness to *this*, the doleful Notes of Wo,*

Which thro' the vast attendant Crouds resound ;

While to the Tomb in solemn State they go,

To lay their *Pastor* in the silent Ground :

Witness to *this*, the swelling Sigh, and Tear,

Which, at his much-lov'd *Name*, their bitter Loss declare.

Ye elder Sons of Wisdom, and of Grace !

Whose Souls he taught to scale *Perfection's* Height,

To seize the brilliant Crown of Righteousness,

Victorious Combatants in "Faith's good Fight"—

You, justly, too the fatal Stroke deplore ;

For ah ! your faithful *Guide*, and *Captain* is no more !

Yes ! *all* his favour'd Flock ! who long did prove

His tender Care, and unremitting Zeal ;

For whom in *secret* Cries and Tears he strove,

And fell, at last, a *Martyr*† to your Weal ;

Unite your Griefs, your *common* Loss deplore,

Since, now, your *Pattern*, *Friend*, and PASTOR is no more.

Nor *you* alone ; let Sorrow's limpid Streams

Flow down, where e'er his far-spread Name is known ;

While all, who've felt his Love's refreshing Beams,

Recall his Mem'ry with an Heart-felt Groan :

Let Zion's Sons the gen'ral Loss deplore ;

For ah ! their *common Friend*, their FLETCHER is no more !

And

And thou, blest Goddess!* in whose bleeding Cause
 He drew the Sword, and fill'd the wond'rous Page,
 To CHECK the Fury of thy daring Foes,
 And ope thy beauties to a blinded Age;
 Join the sad Choir, the fatal Blow deplore;
 For ah! thy *Champion*, and *meek* *Vot'ry* is no more!

But oh! 'bove all the Grief-envelop'd Train,
 Whose Tears bedew his dear, departed Shade,
 What ruthful Anguish, what unequall'd Pain,
 Must rack *thy* Breast, and *thy* fond Heart pervade,
 Thou fair Associate of his Heav'n-born Soul,
 Blest Witness of his Worth, and Sharer of the Whole!

Indulge the guiltless Tear—'tis *thine* to mourn
 The bland *Companion*, and the faithful *Friend*;
 The tender *Husband*, from thy Bosom torn,
 The—choicest *Boon* propitious Heav'n could send;
 Thy *Guardian-Angel's* fled—his Course is o'er—
 That "*Sun of all thy earthly Joy*" will rise no more.

Yet listen to fair *Hope's* soft-soothing Voice;
 She opes the bright'ning Scenes beyond the Tomb,
 And bids thy melancholy Heart rejoice,
 While she unveils the Glories of yon "*Home*,"†
 Where your glad Spirits will quickly re-*unite*,
 And waste eternal Years in sweet, and joint Delight.

Meek

*Religion, or Divine Truth.

†Idem Page 8.

Meek *Refignation* lends her balmy Pow'rs,
 To lull thy Woes, and heal thy wounded Breaſt;
 To sweeten Life, and gild the tedious Hours,
 Which part thee from thy pure, perennial Reſt:
 JESUS will, ſoon, the pearly Gates unfold,
 And “bring thee where he is, his Glory to behold.”*

“His Glory to behold! O! rapt'rous Sight!
 What *unknown* Blifs attends th'extatic Gaze!
 Its diſtant Ray illumes *this* Vale of Night,
 Wipes ev'ry Tear,* and all my Woes allays:
 There I ſhall join my beſt-lov'd Mate again,
 And bid a long Adieu to Parting, Grief, and Pain!”—

And *you*, his drooping Flock, whoſe flowing Tears,
 At once, *your* Friendſhip and *his* Worth declare;
 Let *Faith's* full Beams diſpel your gloomy Fears,
 And chace the low'ring Clouds of fell Deſpair:
 Hark! the glad Sound, that echoes from the Word;
 “I am thy conſtant Shepherd,” ſaith the *living* LORD.

“No Want my duteous Children ſhall ſuſtain,
 Nor Dread of Ill diſturb their ſweet Repoſe;
 In verdant Paſtures they ſhall ſtill remain,
 And reſt where Comfort's ſilent Current flows:
 Tho' haggard Death around his Terrors ſpreads,
 No Injury ſhall reach their Heav'n-defended Heads.”

Here

Here leave thy Sorrows, then, each weeping Soul!

Here, here divest thee of thy fable Weeds;

Quaff these enliven'ing Waters, as they roll,

And range, in fresh Delight, these flow'ry Meads;
Thy constant Shepherd, is the *living* LORD,
Who still will ev'ry Help, and ev'ry Good afford.

Yet, let the pensive Muse your *new-raised* Thought

To melancholy Scenes recall, once more;

Nor less to Scenes with holy Triumph fraught,

And sacred Wisdom's all-important Lore;

The *dying* Bed of your late Pastor view,

Where bland Religion did her choicest Honours strew.

See! where sweet *Peace* sits smiling on his Brow,

And meek-eyed *Patience* on his Breast reclined!

What holy Transports in his Bosom glow!

What grand Ideas "fill" his ravish'd Mind,

While he contemplates, and the wondrous Phrase*

Bursts forth upon his Soul in full, unclouded Blaze!†

"Shout, GOD is Love! O! for that Gust of Praise

I want to send to Earth's remotest Bound!"†

'Tis thus he cries, thus ends his mortal Days,

And breathes his Spirit in th' unfinish'd Sound.

Survey th' important Scene! Attention give,

And learn of him to die, from whom you learn'd to live.

See!

*"God is Love,"

†*Idem.* Page 9.

See! how he soars to yon celestial Place!—

There, there alone we find our Bliss complete;

While God unveils the Glories of his Face,

And we adore in Raptures at his Feet:—

'Tis *there* you'll meet your happy GUIDE again,

And with loud Bursts of Joy swell the immortal Strain!

“Worthy our GOD,” th’angelic Orders cry,

“Glory and Praise for ever to receive!”

“Worthy the LAMB,” his ransom’d Saints reply,

“Of Blessing, more than endless Age can give!”

While ALL rejoin, in full, exulting Strain,

ETERNAL HONOURS to our GOD; Amen, Amen!”

E I N I S

